

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1                    1.        Apparatus for intubation of a body cavity or lumen, the apparatus  
2 comprising:  
3                    an endoscope having a steerable tip; and  
4                    a wire guide,  
5                    wherein the apparatus is configured to preclude advancement of the wire guide  
6 to the steerable tip.
- 1                    2.        The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the wire guide is configured to  
2 reversibly transition between a flexible state and a substantially shape-locked state.
- 1                    3.        The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the wire guide is configured for  
2 advancement relative to a flexible body of the endoscope.
- 1                    4.        The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the wire guide is configured for  
2 advancement within a working channel of the endoscope.
- 1                    5.        The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the wire guide is disposed within an  
2 overtube, the overtube configured for advancement over the endoscope.
- 1                    6.        The apparatus of claim 1, wherein a length of the wire guide precludes  
2 advancement of the wire guide to the steerable tip.
- 1                    7.        The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the wire guide comprises a hub that  
2 precludes advancement of the wire guide to the steerable tip.
- 1                    8.        The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the wire guide comprises a section  
2 that remains flexible when the wire guide is disposed in the shape-locked state.
- 1                    9.        The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the overtube comprises a split  
2 sheath.
- 1                    10.      Apparatus for guiding an endoscope having a working channel with a  
2 substantially rigid tortuous section, the apparatus comprising:  
3                    a shape-lockable wire guide configured for advancement through the working  
4 channel,

5                    wherein the wire guide is configured for relative advancement of the  
6 endoscope when the wire guide is shape-locked and disposed within the rigid tortuous  
7 section.

1                    11.     The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the wire guide comprises a flexible  
2 section that remains flexible when the wire guide is shape-locked.

1                    12.     The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the flexible section is configured  
2 for disposal within the rigid tortuous section of the working channel when the wire guide is  
3 shape-locked.

1                    13.     The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the flexible section comprises a  
2 coil spring.

1                    14.     The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the apparatus is configured to  
2 preclude advancement of the wire guide to a steerable tip of the endoscope.

1                    15.     Apparatus for guiding an endoscope, the apparatus comprising a shape-  
2 lockable overtube configured for advancement relative to the endoscope,  
3 wherein the overtube comprises a seam for reversibly opening the overtube.

1                    16.     The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the overtube further comprises a  
2 rigidizable wire spine configured to reversibly shape-lock the overtube.

1                    17.     The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the seam facilitates reversibly  
2 disposing the shape-lockable overtube over the endoscope.

1                    18.     The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the apparatus is configured to  
2 preclude advancement of the rigidizable wire spine to a steerable tip of the endoscope.

1                    19.     A method for intubating a body cavity or lumen, the method  
2 comprising:  
3                    advancing an endoscope within the body cavity or lumen;  
4                    advancing a wire guide within the body cavity or lumen along the endoscope;  
5                    shape-locking the wire guide; and  
6                    advancing the endoscope along the shape-locked wire guide,

7                    wherein a steerable tip of the endoscope always extends beyond the shape-  
8    locking wire guide.

1                    20.     The method of claim 19, wherein advancing the wire guide along the  
2    endoscope further comprises advancing the wire guide within a working channel of the  
3    endoscope.

1                    21.     The method of claim 19, wherein advancing the wire guide along the  
2    endoscope further comprises disposing the wire guide within an overtube, and advancing the  
3    overtube over the endoscope.

1                    22.     A method for intubating a body cavity or lumen, the method  
2    comprising:  
3                    advancing an endoscope within the body cavity or lumen;  
4                    advancing a split sheath overtube within the body cavity or lumen over the  
5    endoscope;  
6                    shape-locking the overtube; and  
7                    advancing the endoscope along the shape-locked split sheath overtube.